

CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1-52 (canceled)

53. (previously added, currently amended): ~~The method of claim 47, wherein the bacterium is~~ A method to inhibit the growth and development of bacteria that are characterized as being Gram negative, bacilliary, about 0.2X0.8 μ m, facultative anaerobe, grows between 15° and 45°C with a temperature optimum of 37°C, grows between pH 4-11 but not at pH 2, grows in AB13 medium or minimal medium, is motile, lacks a capsule, lacks spores, and produces an elastic, exopolysaccharide with a sugar content of galactose, fucose, glucose, mannose in a ratio of about 1:2:3:6,

which method comprises contacting said bacteria with a composition which comprises propionic acid or a compound containing a propionic acid backbone.

54. (previously added, currently amended): ~~The method of claim 47, wherein said bacterium produces~~ A method to inhibit the growth and development of bacteria that produces an exopolysaccharide consisting essentially of neutral sugars migrating at the same rate as mannose, fucose, fructose and galactose, acidic sugars migrating at the same rate as fucose and amine sugars migrating at the same rate as glucose and fucose, wherein the sugar ratio of galactose:fucose:glucose:mannose is about 1:2:3:6,

which method comprises contacting said bacteria with a composition which comprises propionic acid or a compound containing a propionic acid backbone.

55-56 (canceled)

57. (previously added, currently amended): ~~The method of claim 49~~ A method to inhibit biofilm production by bacteria that excrete a mucoid exopolysaccharide, wherein the bacterium is bacteria are characterized as being Gram negative, bacilliary, about 0.2X0.8 μ m, facultative anaerobe, grows between 15° and 45°C with a temperature optimum of 37°C, grows between pH 4-11 but not at pH 2, grows in AB13 medium or minimal medium, is motile, lacks a capsule, lacks spores, and produces an elastic, exopolysaccharide with a sugar content of galactose, fucose, glucose, mannose in a ratio of about 1:2:3:6,

which method comprises contacting said bacteria with a composition which comprises propionic acid or a compound containing a propionic acid backbone.

58. (previously added, currently amended): ~~The method of claim 49~~A method to inhibit biofilm production by bacteria that excrete a mucoid exopolysaccharide, wherein said bacterium produces the bacteria produce an exopolysaccharide consisting essentially of neutral sugars migrating at the same rate as mannose, fucose, fructose and galactose, acidic sugars migrating at the same rate as fucose and amine sugars migrating at the same rate as glucose and fucose, wherein the sugar ratio of galactose:fucose:glucose:mannose is about 1:2:3:6,

which method comprises contacting said bacteria with a composition which comprises propionic acid or a compound containing a propionic acid backbone.

59. (new): The method of claim 53, wherein said composition comprises 2-(4-isobutylphenyl)-propionic acid.

60. (new): The method of claim 54, wherein said composition comprises 2-(4-isobutylphenyl)-propionic acid.

61. (new): The method of claim 57, wherein said composition comprises 2-(4-isobutylphenyl)-propionic acid.

62. (new): The method of claim 58, wherein said composition comprises 2-(4-isobutylphenyl)-propionic acid.